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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

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August 26, 1980

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The Honorable Edmund S. Muskie
Secretary, Department of State
2201 C Street
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I support your efforts to make the Korean government aware of our concerns relating to the trial of Kim Dae Jung. It has been difficult for him and other political prisoners to obtain defense counsel because the government apparently detains lawyers who express a willingness to defend prisoners.

I believe that the human rights situation in Korea has reached the intolerable level and that we are now in danger of losing the support of the Korean people because of it. Our views must not only continue to be firm but be strongly communicated to the people of Korea through USIS and through radio broadcasts.

If the Korean government continues on the course it is on and unless we strongly object to that oppressive course of action in a way which the Korean people can understand, the people will turn away from democratic ideals and begin to believe they will be no worse off under Communism. Korea would, thereby, be lost to itself and to us as an ally.

In a nutshell, I hope you will pursue a strong course against the repressive activities of the present regime. Relative thereto, I am enclosing the findings of fact of the fact-finding mission that went to Kwangju on behalf of the United Presbyterian Church.

Finally, I hope that the State Department will find ways to make clear to the Korean people our disapproval of General Wickham's statement suggesting U.S. support for General Chun Doo-hwan as president of Korea.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carl Levin

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THE KWANGJU INCIDENT: It is difficult to obtain true, substantiated facts of what has taken place in Kwangju for several reasons. The city and its environs are under very heavy military control, and repressive measures and monitors were still in place when we arrived. The press is heavily censored. Many citizens have been arrested, and many others are in hiding. The people of Kwangju are afraid to talk for fear of retribution, thus obtaining creditable information is almost impossible.

The events which took place in Kwangju were fairly accurately reported in the United States' public media. These accounts are mutually supportive. In summary: initially student demonstrations were peaceful, and were in response to the extraordinary, nation-wide martial law and the arrest of Kim Dae Jung. As far as the accounts support, the demonstrations were peaceful and centered on the universities, Chosun and Chun Nam, and the provincial capitol.

The response of approximately 3,000 paratroopers was in brutal excess. Paratroopers were brought from Kyongsang Province, which corresponds to the usual practice of using troops from a different district, as witnessed in the use of Cholla Province troops against the uprisings in Pusan and Masan. These troops were observed to be drunk and disorderly, but claims that they were drugged could not be substantiated. The troops used M-16 soft bullets and mortars against civilians. Indiscriminate and wanton killing and violence was aimed at citizens regardless of age or sex, and injuries observed support this allegation. The dead and injured were handled inhumanely. Also, those who attempted to assist the injured were killed or wounded for their efforts; for example, taxi drivers who transported the injured to hospitals or aid stations were shot.

The Government estimated the death toll at approximately 170. Responsible Kwangju civilians estimated seven to eight hundred dead, and three to four thousand injured. As mentioned before, there was no central point where accurate information was gathered and made available. Many of the injured were in hiding. In addition, the military took most of the dead and injured to a nearby military hospital. Only a fraction of the civilians were treated at the four civilian hospitals: Kwangju Christian Hospital, the Red Cross Hospital, the Chun Nam University Hospital and the Chosun University Hospital. The following is verified data of the casualties received at one of these hospitals during the first 24 hours of attack:

Total Patients Received	127
Dead on Arrival	13
Death in Emergency Room	1
Death in Hospital	1 (3 days)
Gunshot Wound	79% of injured
Paralyzed	4
Still Remain Hospitalized	8
Transferred from hospital by military prior to recovery	7

The above data is the only verified account we were able to obtain of those we sought.

Specifically, SOFT BULLETS for M-16 rifles were used. This was substantiated by bullet fragments recovered from patients, and x-rays of bullets in patients. This particular kind of bullet explodes upon impact, causing extensive internal injury. In one case, the patient suffered abdominal bullet wounds resulting in multiple organ injury, bowel damage resulting in subsequent subphrenic abcess, necessitating prolonged hospitalization and additional surgery. As mentioned, 79% of the injured treated at this particular hospital suffered gunshot wounds; thus the remaining 21% suffered bayonet stab wounds or multiple contusions from beatings.

CONFISCATED PICTURES were of patients who were treated. The pictures show multiple contusions, particularly of patients of the dead-on-arrival category. One picture depicts a body minus its head, and a neck with scattered fragments of scalp and face attached. Another picture depicts gunshot wounds of the head--one-half of the skull was blown off, exposing brain tissue. Other pictures also depict multiple gunshot wounds, bayonet wounds, as well as multiple contusions.

The staff at this hospital was very gracious and shared all documents and information without hesitation. The hospital staff handled mass casualties with efficiency and dedication. Physicians and supporting personnel remained in the hospital, and cared for those brought to the hospital. Initially there was no shortage of blood as an average of two to three donors accompanied each injured person. When the blood shortage became apparent later, however, doctors, nurses, and other hospital personnel volunteered for donation. Although the hospital temporarily encountered problems with a lack of space and materials, they were able to replenish supplies locally without difficulty. The hospital ran out of rice in the third day but local merchants donated rice without hesitation upon learning of the need. The staff worked around the clock for four days without rest. It was apparent that the hospital was able to maintain its mission and commitment to the community in its hour of need. It is our understanding that the Government is to compensate for approximately 60% of the costs.

KWANGJU CITIZENS: The Government's allegations that the rebellion was communist-instigated and motivated by regionalism are grossly unjustified and untrue. The events indicate that the incidents were in response to the wanton and excessive use of brutal military power. There was no indication

of communist-instigation or communist-infiltration. Kim Dae Jung was arrested one day prior to the initial demonstrations in Kwangju, and his arrest was one reason for the demonstrations, along with the nation-wide extraordinary martial law. A few days ago, the Government announced that Kim Dae Jung and 36 others will be charged with sedition and communist-instigation for inciting the Kwangju Incident. The people of Kwangju repeatedly asked that the rest of the world understand that they did what they felt they had to do--to stand up for their rights, and not just watch their children be killed like animals.

The Government exploited the regionalism allegation, which was markedly exaggerated and untrue, in order to bring in troops from Kyongsang Province, and to make public statements questioning and condemning the loyalty of local troops and police. In some instances, the regionalism allegation was used to disarm local troops and police.

Reports from impartial eyewitnesses indicate that the citizens of Kwangju behaved responsibly and rationally: (1) once troops withdrew from Kwangju, the city remained quiet, (2) there were no incidents of looting or stealing, (3) there were no mob trials or executions, (4) all liberated arms and ammunition were collected into a central safe place and were kept from the hands of irresponsible elements, (5) the streets were cleared and order was maintained, (6) when a food shortage developed, people shared whatever they had and took only their daily needs without hoarding, (7) a Committee of Reconciliation was formed and was able to restore calm and reason, and was able to negotiate a truce and eventual return to Government control. In addition, in four instances the negotiation efforts of the Committee of Reconciliation was able to prevent bloodshed. These efforts were made prior to the final assault by the military in which the Government reneged on its promises. Finally,

(8) the local commander of the military made an apology to Kwangju citizens for the excessive force used by the paratroopers.

Although the Government pledged not to use forced to retake Kwangju, Government troops numbering 18,000 were involved in the final assault and subsequent repression and surveillance that continues to date in Kwangju.

The following are my observations of the situation and sentiment of Korea and its people. There are elements in Korea, including members of the Korean Government and military generals, who claim that Korea is not ready for democracy. At most they concede only to the so-called "limited democracy for Korea" expounded and practiced under the late dictator Park Chung Hee. Events in Kwangju demonstrate that Korean citizens are far more politically mature, and unwilling to be continually mistreated, than these people suggest. Citizens have shown that they are willing to sacrifice for the right to have a free society comprised of free individuals. Once they were in control of Kwangju, their actions were those of responsible and concerned citizens making an orderly determination of their affairs. The lesson to be learned from the Kwangju Incident is that repression can not suppress the true aspirations of the common Korean people. The present regime will not last long if it continues on its present course.

Regarding the CHRISTIAN CHURCH and its LEADERSHIP, there appears to be a definite theological division within Korean Christian churches. There are those who accuse human rights activists as being politically misinformed and misguided and there are those who feel it is the essence of Christian witness and discipleship to express human needs and concerns for social justice.

An unknown number of Christian clergy and laity are imprisoned, detained, tortured, or in hiding, and as a reuslt some churches are completely without the

leadership of a minister, an assistant minister, and a majority of the elders. Church activities are limited to Sunday morning worship service and mid-week prayer service. Any other meetings can not be held without prior authorization. Consequently, the Seoul Galilee church service is not held, and the Thursday prayer service at the Korean National Council of Churches is not allowed. It is hard to tell what the extent of the damage has been to churches in Korea. It is my impression that our church stands steadfastly, and is able to sustain and even flourish under this adverse repression.

Regarding POLITICAL PRISONERS, reportedly there are approximately two hundred political prisoners but the exact number is difficult to come by. Certainly it is several times more than that claimed by the Government. I was told that at least seven hundred prisoners were taken when troops re-took Kwangju, and that subsequently several hundred more have been arrested. In Jeonju, approximately three hundred persons have been arrested according to a reliable source. There is a "wanted list" of three hundred persons, and their pictures are posted on many walls in Kwangju. Most of these people are in hiding. There is also an allegation that the Government has an unpublished list of approximately three hundred people whom they view are more important, and these people are either in hiding or are already arrested. Another source stated that at least one thousand people were arrested or detained in the Seoul area. Since all newspapers are censored, and the news is manipulated, no truly accurate picture can be obtained. KNCC Human Rights Division stated its frustration in trying to keep track of important Christian dissidents, not to mention students, laity, and non-Christians.

An even more desperate situation is that of immediate family members who are not given any information regarding the charges against those imprisoned.

or detained, where, why, or how one was detained. The fact is that there is not even a semblance of basic human decency or justice in these imprisonment practices. There have been reports that several dissidents were tortured so severely that they required hospitalization. There are also reports that the government threatens to arrest and torture family members if the wanted persons can not be located. Although we planned to visit three dissidents in Seoul, we were advised not to go.

I can not say that ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT is strong in Korea, but I can safely state that there is a very strong sense of disbelief, mistrust, and dismay at the United States' failure to intervene in Park's actions and in the use of military force against civilians by the present government. There is definite latent anti-American senitment present. In particular, people wonder how the U.S. military intelligence could have failed to detect the front-line troop withdrawal of December 12, 1979 which resulted in a gun battle in the city of Seoul. People also question General John Wickham's approval of deploying troops in Kwangju against civilians. Recent public statements made by President Carter and Secretary of State Muskie are viewed as merely public relations ploys, or at best a weak slap on the wrist. An article in the Korea Times stated that President Carter favors a gradual transition to civilian government in korea. This type of report and U.S. actions thus far, although manipulated and misused by the Korean Government, is viewed by the Koreans as an attempt to foster a military regime in Korea like Park's regime--one which would maintain the status quo and secure for the United States its economic and military exploitation as governed by U.S. geopolitical necessity and economic interests. If events in Korea continue on their present course, and the United States does not exercise its influence to moderate, the dismay and disbelief present now would easily turn into overt anti-American actions.